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MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

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The statutes (Ch. 21, G.L.) define natural resources as follows:

> The words "natural resources," as used herein, shall be held to include ocean, shellfish, and inland fisheries; wild birds, including song and insectivorous birds; wild mammals and game; sea and fresh water fish of every description; forests and all uncultivated flora, together with public shade and ornamental trees and shrubs; land, soil and soil resources; lakes, ponds, streams, coastal, underground and surface waters; minerals and natural deposits.

Chapter 21 further directs the Department to "be concerned with the development of public recreation as related to such natural resources" and states that it shall have control and supervision of such parks, forests, and areas of recreational, scenic, or historic significance as may be from time to time committed to it."

In short, "it shall be the duty of the department to exercise general care and oversight of the natural resources of the commonwealth and its adjacent waters."

History in brief

Massachusetts' activities in the inland natural resources field commenced in 1904 when the office of State Forester was first authorized. A few years later the duties of the State Moth Superintendent were added.

In 1914 the legislature authorized the establishment of a State Forest Commission whose purpose was to purchase land for forest improvement. Much of the land initially acquired, more than 100,000 acres in all, was badly burned or cut over and considered waste land at the time of purchase.

In 1919 the State Constitutional Convention included among twenty official agencies of the Commonwealth a Department of Conservation. A Division of Fisheries and Game, which included marine fisheries, and a Division of Animal

Industry, which was responsible for the prevention, control and eradication of contagious diseases among domestic animals and was later transferred to the Department of Agriculture.

A Division of Parks was established in 1933, and in the same year the first camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps were set up on Massachusetts state forests. During the CCC program, which ended in 1939, the number of camps grew until more than 10,000 young men were employed in conservation programs and recreation development work.

Prior to 1933 there were virtually no recreation facilities in the state forests. The work of the CCC enabled the Department to inherit after World War II the majority of its recreation facilities, including camp and picnic sites, swimming areas, trails, log cabins, bathhouses, new ponds and many other opportunities which the public enjoy today.

In 1939, 1948, 1953, 1956 and 1963 the Department's structure was further changed by legislative action, with the reorganization of 1953 the foundation of its present form. In this year, the Department of Conservation was abolished and a Department of Natural Resources established under Chapter 631 of the Acts of 1953.

Commissioner and Board of Natural Resources

Exercising full control over the Department, according to the reorganization of 1953, is an unpaid, five man Board of Natural Resources, whose members are appointed by the Governor for staggered five-year terms. A Commissioner acts as the Department's executive officer and serves at the pleasure of the Board.

In addition to exercising full supervision and control over the various divisions and bureaus of the Department, the Commissioner represents the Department as a member of other state and interstate agencies, including the Pesticide Board, Public Access Board, Agricultural Program Board,

Historical Commission, Joint Board on Tourist Routes, Weather Amendment Board, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission.

Department-wide responsibilities for personnel, budget, purchasing, payroll, and accounting are centralized within a 35 member administrative unit, and legislative and public relations services are also handled from this office.

Division of Forests & Parks

Approximately 217 permanent and 423 seasonal employees presently comprise the Division of Forests and Parks, which, as its name implies, is chiefly responsible for programs relating to the improvement and protection of nearly 200,000 acres of state forest and park land.

In addition to the bureaus listed below, the Director of Forests and Parks exercises direct supervision over five regional forest and park supervisors who, in turn, are charged with the execution of all division programs and the supervision of all manpower and equipment within their respective regions. A small engineering section in this office is responsible for programs of land acquisition and the maintenance of maps and records involving governing the Division's extensive forest and park holdings.

A Bureau of Forest Development houses the Department's professional forestry services, which are available to public and private landowners alike. This Bureau raises for public sale approximately one million tree seedlings each year, supervises the harvesting and improvement of state forest acreage by private operators, and extends advisory assistance upon request to the state's 29,000 private woodland owners and 153 primary wood-using industries.

The Bureau of Recreation serves as the operating, construction and maintenance agency of the Department for recreational facilities within state forests, parks and reservations. At the present time, more than forty

separate areas offer public recreation opportunities to the general public from May 1 to October 15 annually. In addition to the above functions, the Bureau is often called upon, and authorized by law, to render advice to city and town park agencies in relation to local recreation programs.

The Bureau of Forest Fire Control in conjunction with an extensive network of municipal forest wardens, is responsible for the prevention of fire and the protection of the Commonwealth's three million forested acres. Fifty-two observation towers are manned by Bureau personnel, fire weather danger readings are reassured, and a supplemental force of equipment and manpower is available to the municipalities for suppression work upon request.

The Bureau of Insect Pest Control has similar protection responsibilities in the fields of forest insects and disease. It conducts regular surveys of conditions and engages in actual suppression measures where outbreaks of major severity occur. Included among many statutory "public nuisances" under its jurisdiction are the gypsy moth, white pine blister rust, and Dutch elm disease. In addition to work on state properties, the Bureau is empowered to recommend, supervise and assist control programs conducted by other state agencies or political subdivisions of the Commonwealth.

Division of Marine Fisheries

The Commonwealth's 2000 square miles of inshore waters, and the sustenance of their estimated $57 million annual value to commercial and recreational interests, is the prime responsibility of the Department's 50 man Division of Marine Fisheries. Teams of biologists conduct intensive surveys of coastal estuaries and advise cities and towns on the management of shellfish and other fishery resources. An active program is conducted annually to restore runs of anadromous species (herring) to coastal rivers and streams.

The Division operates a lobster hatchery and marine research station on

Martha's Vineyard, and a shellfish purification plant at Newburyport. A second marine research station at Salem has been authorized by legislative act.

The Division is also the licensing and regulatory agency of the Commonwealth in the marine fisheries field, and with some exceptions, may insure the most modern management techniques by administrative regulation subject to the approval of a representative Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission.

Division of Law Enforcement

This Division, as its name implies, is the protective and security arm of the Department through its force of 66 uniformed officers and units of radio-equipped vehicles and patrol boats. It is the duty of the Division and its officers to enforce all of the penal laws and regulations of the Department and to direct all inspections, claims and investigations.

Seasonal patrols are maintained in the substantial network of park, public hunting and fishing areas, and intensive patrols are also established to prevent woodland fires and take appropriate action in the event of unlawful or negligent burning. Patrol of shellfish producing areas in the interest of public health, and the enforcement of commercial fishing regulations in the state's territorial waters are other important phases of the Divisions responsibilities.

Prevention and education are among the prime objectives of the Division of Law Enforcement as exemplified by the extensive courses in the safe handling of firearms conducted by its officers each year.

Division of Conservation Services

Newly established by legislative act in 1963, the Division of Conservation Services offers a focal point within the Department for municipal and private conservation agencies. It administers an assistance program for two hundred

municipal conservation commissions and, with the help of a State Advisory Committee, distributes state funds and generally advises the Commonwealth's fifteen legally-established conservation districts (formerly soil conservation districts).

The Division also supplies staff services to the office of the Commissioner and other Divisions in the fields of resource planning and interagency liaison.

Division of Water Resources

A legal entity of the Department, yet directly responsible to a nine member Water Resources Commission of which the Commissioner of Natural Resources in by law Chairman, the Division of Water Resources is the coordinating, fact-finding and policy agency of the Commonwealth in the water resources field.

In conjunction with other state and federal agencies, it operates a system of weather stations, observation wells, and stream gauging stations to maintain constant records of the state's surface and ground water resources.

It conducts cooperative ground water investigations with the U. S. Geological Survey, engages in studies of surface water and potential reservoir sites on a river basin basis, and regulates the activities of private well drillers in Massachusetts.

The Commission, and its Division, have been designated by executive action to advise and act for the Governor on all federal water resource projects. By legislative action, the Commission also serves as a representative of the Commonwealth on three interstate flood control commissions, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, and the federal-state Northeastern Resources Committee.

In addition, the Divisions functions have recently included the construction of reservoirs under the federal Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, (P.L. 566) and responsibility for the non-federal portions of hurricane